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The Cheerful Letter

Every place a church; every day the Lord's day; all events blessings; all joy thanksgiving; and all nature and life full of Good.—James Freeman Clarke.

Vol. XLII DECEMBER, 1933 No. 6

THE MEASURE OF VALUE IN A GIFT

"And they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary his mother; and they fell down and worshipped him; and opening their treasures, they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh." Matt. 2: 11.

The coming of the Wise men to worship does not really belong to Christmas time. It took place some time after the birth of Jesus, a week or longer. It belongs to what the church calls the feast of the Epiphany. The Wise Men came and found the Babe no longer domiciled in a stable and cradled in a manger. Joseph and Mary and the Holy Child were in a house. Yet we always link the story to Christmas Day and rightly. For somewhere out on the desert on the night Christ was born, there shone a mysterious star, and men were pressing weary camels that they might come to bring Him adoration. When they came, they found Him, the King they sought, and knelt down and opened their treasure.

That was the beginning of all the open-hearted and generous giving of Christmas time, of the desire to make the world brighter and to bring into it the love of Christ.

The gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh seem exceedingly costly. So they were, not simply in contrast with the possessions of the peasant parents who received them, but costly even in the land from which they came. Yet they were familiar to the Wise Men. They were not common things, but they were the products of the Wise Men's country, and thus they were symbolic. It was as if they said: "O King, you are to be Lord not merely of this land but of our country. You can see that it is a goodly land. But it never will know full joy until there you have reigned, and the hearts of men have become stronger and their hands more productive." The coming of the Wise Men makes us think of God's gifts to men and of men's gifts to God.

Our beloved poet and philosopher Emerson tells us that the value of a gift lies in what we put into it, that each gift must be a part of one's self. A true gift has the marks of understanding, sympathy and appropriateness, and these three things are not come by without cost, without patience and study. So Emerson adds: 'Don't give where you don't love.' You cannot put into your gift what belongs there, unless you put into it some sacrifice. It is like Paul saying, "If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor but have not love, it profiteth me nothing."

The Wise Men gave in love. To their gold and frankincense they added the effort and sacrifice of a perilous journey across the desert. They gave intelligently. Kneeling before the Child, they realized something of His significance.

Distracted by the muchness of the giving of today, we try to simplify it. "What would you like for Christmas?" we say. Then we telephone to a store and send an order. But this is not altogether satisfactory. For one thing, it takes out of the gift the quality of unexpectedness, which adds the touch that reaches the heart. Have you never exclaimed of a present: "Just the very thing that I wanted, but I never said that I wanted it!" To Emerson, the perfect gift was one for which people never thought of asking because they never really understood that they wanted it. The discovery of a want makes a perfect gift.

Is not this characteristic of God's gifts to us? They issue from divine sympathy.

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God so loved the world that He gave His greatest gift to us. They are the result of foresight. How many of His gifts anticipate our needs! Take an illustration as common as coal. Here energy was stored up ages before man conceived that he needed it. Only in the last generation have men thought of capturing power for the mill-wheel, the turbine, the motor. Yet it is all about us. Long ago God thought of it and laid it up for man. Sunshine, air, bread—provision for all man's fundamental needs God made before man came on earth. Paul, speaking to pagans at Lystra, reminds them: "He left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness."

Back of the loaf is the snowy flour,
And back of the flour is the mill.
And back of the mill are the sun and the shower
And the dew and the Father's will.

Again, in His gifts, God awakens us to appreciation. Think of the wealth of beauty about us—starry heavens, sunset sky, field, river, wayside flower! How long it took men to discover beauty! Yet God loved it and put it here for us.

How true this was of the greatest of all bestowals, the gift of Christ to men! This climax of God's giving came before earth wanted Him. "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not." All men of His race were looking for a king to crush their foes. The little Babe who came was born to poverty, not to a throne. Growing up in a forsaken town, He went among men, by His presence creating the desire for Him. To touch Him was to waken to new hopes, new fears, new passions. "Peace I give unto you"—this He said when people had given up all thought of peace. When men saw Him, they wanted Him. Paul tells us that he had followed all the great prizes of life and that they had come to be to him as naught—"that I may win Christ."

The Wise Men came to express by their gifts their response to the giving of God. When they saw the little Child in His mother's arms, what did they themselves think of their gifts? Those who stood by might have said that it would be wise to sell these costly things for the benefit of the humble parents. But what significance would have been lost from the picture of the nativity! When they saw the holy Babe, they knew that they had found the infant King.

After all, the great thing about any gift is to touch the heart, and this the practical thing does not always do. Just after the war, a toy ship was sent at Christmas to Europe. Some persons said that it was foolish to send dolls and picture-books instead of food and clothing; but neither man nor child can live by bread alone. If I am giving to a child in a hospital, I may send a surgical shoe, but I may add a toy.

The greatest gift made to Jesus was perfume from an alabaster box. Someone said that it might have been sold for much and the money given to the poor. But Jesus answered that it had come in the hour when He needed strength, and that the gift should be immortal. There is a poverty of the rich, a poverty of loneliness, of friendlessness. We can make gifts to such that bring peace to the soul.

We must think of the wisdom and the fitness of our making gifts to God. "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits to me?" Some people lose faith because they never give anything to God. Contemptible gifts make contempt for God. Shall we give our gold? Yes, whatever is best in our lives, the richest part of our endowment. Shall we give our frankincense, our worship? Yes, though sometimes it is easier to give

other things than prayer. Shall we give myrrh? The ancients associated myrrh with the cross. Have you ever thought of bringing to God the cross in your life, your sorrow or trial, whatever absorbs you?

Give yourself. It is all you have, but nothing less will do. Then your life will be transformed. For every heart to which Christ comes is made different. Every gift He touches is enriched.—*Rev. Henry Evertson Cobb, D.D., in the Boston Transcript.*

THE MIRACLE

Every Christmas night the homes of earth are supposed to leave their doors ajar, and wine and food upon the table, for theirs might be the lucky house wherein Christ may enter when he revisits the earth.

The wonder of the Christmas night,
To me will ever be;
As nearer draws that Holy time
He came to set men free.

And we are told that each rebirth
Of man's salvation hour,
When he is lifted up from earth,
Through Christ's miraculous power.

He comes again on Christmas Night,
And He may enter in
The lowly cot, the mansion grand,
If it be wide to Him.

Haste, set your house in order now,
The time draws close and dear;
Go light the candles for His feet,
Lay neat the board with cheer.

And pray each one that yours may be
The house that blessed shall be;
I only pray as He goes by,
My beacon light He'll see.

—*Marion G. Goddette.*

KEEPING CHRISTMAS

There is a better thing than the observance of Christmas day, and that is keeping Christmas. Are you willing to forget what you have done for other people, and to remember what other people have done for you; to ignore what the world owes you, and to think what you owe the world; to put your rights in the background; your duties in the middle distance, and your chances to do a little more than your duty in the foreground; to see that your fellowmen are just as real as you are, and try to look behind their faces to their hearts, hungry for joy; to own that probably the only good reason for your existence is not what you are going to get out of life, but what you are going to give to life; to close your book of complaints against the management of the universe, and look around you for a place where you can sow a few seeds of happiness—are you willing to do these things even for a day? Then you can keep Christmas.

—*Henry Van Dyke.*

CHRISTMAS STREETS

The streets are full of life and vivid cheer—
They glimmer like a splendid wonderland—
And we, like children, thrilling, hand in hand,
Can almost, through the tumult, seem to hear
The sound of silver sleighbells, and the sound
Of reindeer hoofs shod with enchanted gold—
Our hearts are filled with happiness untold,
And yet, when we have paused to glance around,
We see a ragged child, her wee nose pressed
Against the brightness of some window glass—
We see an outcast shiver, and we pass
A slender woman who is thinly dressed . . .
The streets are full of life and vivid glow,
But they are touched with want and grim despair—
The Christmas spirit, throbbing on the air,
Has filled some souls with loneliness and woe!

—MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

CORRESPONDENTS AND APPEALS

MRS. JOHN A. MCCADDIN, *Chairman*, 21 Ashfield Street, Roslindale, Mass.

A correspondent writing to the Exchange for the first time should always give as reference the name and address of her minister.

When a correspondent moves to a new address, notice should be sent to Headquarters, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass., and to those persons who have been sending letters and reading matter.

It is necessary to state positively that the Cheerful Letter Exchange is not a "clothing bureau" and not a "charitable" society in the usual sense of the word.

It is contrary to the rules of the Cheerful Letter Exchange to allow any one to make use of its magazine by addressing letters asking for money, clothing, or other articles, to those whose names are printed in the paper. This prohibition includes requests to borrow money and the offering of articles for sale. The name of any person who disobeys this rule will be dropped from the list, and any one who receives a request of this description is desired by the Central Committee to return no answer, but to enclose the letter at once to the Chairman of this Department.

Many people do care for just the kind of friendly service for which we are organized. We limit our efforts to them and their wishes.

APPEALS

1. Mrs. W. R. May, Peach Bottom, Pa., wishes to thank all through this little magazine for the cheer that has been sent to her. The children are in school now, and she is hoping for a mild winter as the children have to walk such a long distance to school. She hopes that they will not be forgotten this winter.

2. Mrs. H. H. Foster, Post, Texas, writes to thank all her *Cheerful Letter* friends who remembered her in the spring. She visited her daughter in Colorado this summer, but has now returned to her own home. Mrs. Foster would like some quilting patterns as she does fancy quilting and is not able to buy the patterns.

3. Miss Bessie Stewart, R. 4, Dayton, Tenn., is asking for some sewing material, especially quilt pieces. Her mother is in poor health, and Bessie has to care for her. She loves to read but is unable to afford any at all. She enjoys the *Cheerful Letter Magazine* which she receives every month. She would like to hear from some of her friends.

4. I am coming again to ask to please be remembered this winter, especially at Christmas time. My dear husband passed away last summer leaving me alone. I would be so pleased to receive some quilt pieces to help pass away the lonely winter. Mrs. W. R. Eanes, R. 2, Bassett, Va.

5. I would like to thank all the good friends who have sent me quilt pieces. I do so enjoy reading the little magazine. I have two children, a girl aged 4, and a boy 2. I would certainly appreciate any kind of amusement for them, and hope that some of the good friends will remember them through Christmas. I need some sugar or salt sacks to make the linings for my quilts. Mrs. Donnie Jones, Tuckerdale, N. C.

6. It has been some time since I have heard from any of the dear *Cheerful Letter* friends. I feel that I must be forgotten. I would be so glad if someone would send me quilt pieces, odd bits of embroidery thread, rug material, or anything that would furnish pastime for a lonely woman in the hills. My little girl, 5 years old, would enjoy some books or cards, anything to amuse her. Mrs. Chester Couch, Archey, Ark.

7. I would be glad of some quilt pieces, sewing, also some reading to help pass away the lonely hours. I have one little girl 8 years old. We live far off the road. My little girl would be glad to get some jig-saw puzzles after some one be-

comes tired of them. We hope to be remembered at Christmas time. Mrs. Austin Cogburn, Leo, Texas.

8. I want the *Cheerful Letter* friends to know how much we appreciate the cheer that has come to our home from the *Cheerful Letter* friends. The *Cheerful Letter Exchange* certainly has been a blessing to the mountain people here. I have been married twenty years and have had to take care of my husband who has been in poor health all these years. The Exchange has sent all sorts of reading material and our two boys, Charlie and Elgin, certainly have enjoyed it. It has helped them to reach the 6th and 7th grades in school. We have always been very poor people and live far from schools or advantages of any kind for the boys. The children around the Blue Ridge Mountains have a poor chance at best. We live on a rented place and the woods and mountains are very beautiful, but we can't live by looking at it. We do hope that the reading and sewing material will continue to come to us. We pass all reading, either give it or lend it to the other folks around us who enjoy it as much as we do. I wish that all the *Cheerful Letter* people could visit in these mountains and see how much good they have done. Without them the children wouldn't even have a paper to look at. My beds are getting thin and a shower of pieces and sugar and salt sacks would be very welcome. Mrs. G. Lee Roberson, Dodson, Va.

9. Reading or any kind of sewing material would be so much appreciated, and I hope the dear *Cheerful Letter* friends will remember my three little boys, ages 5½, 4, and 2, at Christmas time. Mrs. Bernard Wallace, R. 1, Box 95 B, Glasgow, Va.

10. I am writing to the *Cheerful Letter* once more. I haven't heard from anyone for a long time. I am still on the firing line trying to do my bit to help out in these trying times. I am not able to do much but I thank my Heavenly Father that I am able to be up and in no worse health. I would be so pleased to hear from any of the *Cheerful Letter* friends again and to know that I am not forgotten. I hope that this letter is printed in time for Christmas as I am sure that I will get no gifts at home. I would like to get a few toys for the little ones if anyone has any to spare. I would like a few decorations for a Christmas tree. Anything that anyone can spare. We can't please the old folks but we can please the little ones. I am trusting that I get something for my little grandchildren, four boys from 11 to 3, and four little girls ranging in age from 4 to 1. I sure would be glad to get some pieces for patch work, any kind of thread, or yarn for knitting. I don't know what we would have done for thread this past summer if the *Cheerful Letter* people hadn't sent some to me. We can't buy any new clothes and I have so much mending to do on the old ones. I would love something to read. There is nothing that gives us so much pleasure as getting a package and looking in and not knowing what you are going to get. I do hope that we get our packages this year. I had the promise of two last year, but only got one, and that was in January. I was pleased just the same but it wasn't the same as if we had received it in time for Christmas. Mrs. Cutler Hill, Lawsonville, N. C.

11. Mrs. Ben Wilson, R. 4, Box 88, Decatur, Tenn., would like to be remembered this winter with quilt pieces, thread and any kind of cheer. She has three girls, 16, 8, and 4, and a boy 6. She hopes that they will be remembered at Christmas time with cards and toys.

12. I haven't heard from any of my *Cheerful Letter* friends for a long time. I am confined to my home most of the time caring for my children. I have 11 of them, 5 boys and 6 girls, ages from 4 months to 24 years. As we live far off the road I would appreciate some pieces of material for the girls, and some books and papers for the little ones. I wish to thank all for the cheer sent in the past and hope that I will be remembered. Mrs. W. M. Richardson, Brandon, N. C.

13. I wish to take this means of thanking all for past favors. It would

mean so much to me and my two small children, a girl aged 10, and a boy 9 years old to receive some cheer during the long winter. We would appreciate some good reading, some sewing material, also would like to hear from some of my friends. Mrs. Annie L. Rhodes, Snowden, Va.

14. Mrs. Mary Bond, R. 1, Decatur, Texas, writes asking for a bit of reading for her young son, 13 years old. She has been receiving cheer from the Exchange for 24 years. She sends thanks for the little magazine and always passes it along to some one else to enjoy.

15. I hope you all have not forgotten me. I hope to be remembered at Christmas as I have had so much bad luck. We lost our house by fire and all that we had about two years ago. My husband died this year. Times are so hard with little work to do. I will be glad of reading or anything that can be spared. Mrs. Sallie McLendon, Wadesboro, N. C.

16. I haven't been well for a long time. Was operated on in August. I would be so thankful for any kind of cheer. I love to do any kind of fancy work and will be glad to have quilt pieces. I hope that the *Cheerful Letter* friends will remember us this winter and at Christmas time. I have one girl 15, boy 17, and a baby girl 9. I want to thank every one who sent us reading last winter. We certainly did enjoy the books. Mrs. Lochie Ashley, Lansing, N. C.

17. Mrs. W. B. Thompson, Unionville, Va., would be thankful for some narcissus bulbs, also embroidery cotton and bits of lace.

18. I have two boys 7 and 8 years old. They would be tickled to receive bits of cheer. I would like reading and quilt pieces or cheer of any kind. We hope to be remembered. Mrs. Edna Smith, Rupert, Ark.

19. I am sending thanks to every one who remembered me in any way, as I was too sick to answer them all. I underwent a very serious operation, in fact, it was four operations in one. I was in the hospital nearly seven weeks and am still quite weak and am not able to do my work. I am slowly recovering for which I am thankful. Of course I will be shut in all this winter, and will appreciate any kindness any one can show me in any way. Mrs. L. E. Cox, Buffalo Ridge, Va.

20. Mrs. Susie Thompson, R. 2, Norton, Kansas, a member of the Exchange many years ago, writes once more for cheer. Her family have all married and gone away and now she is alone. She asks for reading and quilt scraps to help pass the lonely hours. As she is not well, she can not get out much. She is almost 60 years old. She sends thanks for the nice books that were sent to her in the past.

21. Mrs. Mary Camden, Madison Heights, Va., wishes to thank the ones who are sending the "Humane Review" and some other reading. She lost the address and so couldn't write. They all enjoy reading them very much. Her daughter, 15 years old, enjoys good books.

22. As I am just out of the hospital and won't be able to work for some time, I am asking the *Cheerful Letter* friends to please send me some prints and percale pieces as I want to make my comforts for cold weather. Miss Florence Cooper, R. 2, Unionville, Va.

23. Mrs. H. C. Hottinger, Hebron, Ohio, who has been a shut-in for a number of years, writes to ask her friends to send her some silk pieces, bits of ribbon and lace, cotton patches, and cotton thread, and white cotton pieces to bind up sores. They will be appreciated.

24. Mrs. A. C. Shipley, Code, Mo., writes that she has been sick and crippled for over two years. She has been very lonesome. She would love to have some flour sacks and a little embroidery and crochet thread to help pass some of the lonesome hours.

25. Mrs. Elsie Jamison, now of Buffalo Ridge, Va., appreciates the cheer sent to her last winter. She wishes to thank every one, as in winter she has to stay indoors on account of rheumatism. The children love to receive mail. She asks for bits of pencils and paper for the children and sewing for herself.

26. I wish to thank all for past favors and hope to be remembered with cheer this winter. We are in great trouble at present. My son's wife passed away in July, leaving four small children, the oldest only twelve. Any quilt scraps, also anything for the children ranging from six to twelve, would be gratefully received. Mrs. M. H. Coleman, Spencer, Va.

27. Mrs. M. R. Knight, Manchester, N. C., a new member of the Exchange, has written asking for reading for her three children, a girl 13, a boy 10, and a girl 5. The oldest girl would like some sewing material.

28. Miss Kittie L. Ross, Stuart, Va., would be glad of any books, or anything to read.

29. Mrs. Andrew Murphy, R. 5, Dayton, Tenn., c/o Alice Ward, would like some scrap books, and magazines to read.

30. Mrs. R. M. Dalton, Epperson, Tenn., writes that winter is almost here, and as they live in the mountains, it is impossible for them to get out much. Reading would be a great comfort to them.

31. Mrs. I. E. Shumate, Peachbottom, Pa., writes that she has been ill all the past summer. She has four children and they would be glad of any kind of cheer.

32. I would like to have "Wee Wisdom" or any kind of reading matter or amusements and educational literature for children ages 12 and 13. I would like to have "The Science of Mind" and any kind of reading matter for myself. If religious, I would like it on the liberal line. I piece quilt quilts and would like any kind of material to make them. I also make rugs and would be delighted to get old hose or any material to make rag rugs. Mrs. H. T. West, R.F.D. 6, Cummings, Ga.

33. Mrs. Verla Kirkpatrick, R. 1, Box 229, c/o W. L. Carter, Chillicothe, Texas, sends loving greetings to the Exchange and hopes that her friends will remember her this winter. She asks for sewing material of any kind and reading as the long winter is coming.

34. Mrs. L. L. Pack, Fort Cobb, Oklahoma, writes that she has 8 children at home, the two oldest are girls, 14 and 17. Then there are three sets of twins, girls age 11, boys age 7, and a baby boy and girl age 11 months. The children would be delighted if some one remembered them at Christmas. Mrs. Pack would enjoy some reading and sewing, especially quilt pieces.

35. I wonder if someone would send me some cheer. I live in the mountains and get very lonely. I like to sew and do fancy work such as embroidery. Will some one please send me some reading matter? I would be so glad if after reading some magazine some dear *Cheerful Letter* friend would pass it along to me. I would like the American Magazine, also the Ladies' Home Journal or the Red Book. Reading is almost our only amusement, and I do enjoy it so much, but we are not able to buy any magazines. Miss Allene M. Turner, Box 13, Buffalo Ridge, Va.

36. I want to make a Friendship quilt and I want to ask the readers of the *Cheerful Letter* magazine to send me a block 12 by 12. If any care to send the block, I shall certainly appreciate it. This block can be made of any kind of material. Mrs. Caroline Wall, R. 1, Box 44, Wadesboro, N. C.

37. Mrs. Purcell Ladd, Cobham, Va., lost her home and all their belongings by fire. She is very much in need of quilts this winter and would appreciate bundles of pieces to make them from.

38. Mrs. J. O. Norwood, R. 1, Athens, Tenn., writes that she hasn't heard from any of the friends for over a year. Her sister died in October leaving three little children. Mrs. Norwood would like some sewing material to help pass the lonely hours.

39. My health is so much worse than it was when I wrote a year ago. I am unable to be on my feet long at a time. I would be glad if the *Cheerful Letter* friends would send me some pieces of cloth for quilts and odds and ends of thread. I hope that the children will be remembered at Christmas time. Mrs. J. W. Parsons, Grassy Creek, N. C.

40. Mrs. Luther Powers, Lansing, N. C., would appreciate some sewing and a bit of embroidery thread. She writes that she hasn't heard from anyone for a long time.

41. I want to thank all the dear *Cheerful Letter* people for past favors. I have not heard from anyone for a long time. I hope that you will not forget me through Christmas as I want to have a brighter one this time if it be God's will. I spent last Christmas in the hospital and the doctor says I must go back, but I am putting it off as long as I can. I wonder if someone will remember my little children with toys and things. My little girl 6 years old has never had a doll. She loves them and would appreciate one so much. Mrs. Zenna Blevins, Grassy Creek, N. C.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

Mrs. P. E. Kirkpatrick from Bonham to R. 1, Box 229, Chillicothe, Texas.

Miss Allene M. Turner from Dodson to Box 13, Buffalo Ridge, Va.

Mrs. Donnie Jones from Tuckerdale to Husk, N. C.

Mrs. M. H. Coleman from Critz to Spencer, Va.

Mrs. Elsie Jamison from Dodson to Buffalo Ridge, Va.

Mrs. L. E. Cox from Dodson to Buffalo Ridge, Va.

Mrs. Frances Vess from Rhome to 616 Brook Ave., Waco, Texas.

DEATHS

Mrs. R. Wright, R. 1, Peachland, N. C., passed away last August.

Mrs. Estie Mitchell, Crossville, Ala., died on August 9, 1933.

THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

The Shepherds came to the stable where the Young Child lay with Mary his mother, and peering in through the door, they saw that everything the Angel had told them out there in the fields was true. Here was the Babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. The sign was verified. In great wonder, the Shepherds told what they had seen, what the Angel had prophesied regarding this new-born Babe, that he was their Saviour, their Lord Christ. Every one marveled at the Shepherds' story. Mary marveled as much as any. But, unlike the rest, she kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

We are not told the nature of her ponderings. We have to put ourselves in her place, so far as that is possible, if we would know how these strange reports about her little innocent Baby affected her. He was very much her Baby just now, utterly helpless without her.

But then there came to her mind, as a very sobering thought, the Angel's prophecy which the excited Shepherds had just reported: that this Babe, her Babe, for whom her solitary love was everything, would grow up to be the Lord Christ, the Saviour of his people.

Mary's ponderings suggest the deeper aspect of Christmas. The Saviour who is Christ the Lord cannot be any one person's possession, not even his own mother's possession. He belongs to the whole of humanity and the whole of time. The love which is divine cannot be satisfied with a single object. It embraces all and includes all. The heart unto which has been entrusted the task of Christ cannot be filled by a particular hope or a particular solicitude. It can be satisfied only by a universal hope and solicitude for all mankind. Selfishness and Christmas, exclusiveness and Christmas, prejudice and Christmas, these are mutually antipathetic thoughts. They cannot dwell side by side. Mary found that out long ago. Every Christmas bears that constant message to us. Every Christmas says to us, If you would truly celebrate me, you must be for this day at least a Divine Man. You must widen your friendliness, your good will to a Divine breadth. You must forget race and color and class and creed, and take your stand with Christ upon that Common Denominator in which all creatures are included, and which is our universal dependence upon Him whose love sustains all.

—Rev. Charles E. Park, D.D.

GIVING THAT IS PROMPTED BY SACRIFICE

"What is back of our Christmas may be one thing, what should be back of it may be quite another thing. What is back of it depends wholly upon the state of our own heart. Some people give at Christmas time as a social obligation to keep up appearances. Some give because on the last Christmas someone remembered them. Some give with the expectation of eliciting gifts from their friends. I know of one wealthy person who gives large sums at Christmas time in order to evade taxes. The gifts are always made to her heirs, however, so that the money will be kept in the family. A great many members of the church give because their pastor makes a passionate plea for gifts at Christmas time, and they want their pastor to think of them as generous people. All such giving is prompted by purely selfish motives. It is doubtful whether they are accepted with favor by God. It is almost certain that they do not in any sense carry out the spirit of the Christmas season.

"Some people give at Christmas time because it furnishes them an opportunity to be generous. Many fathers look upon Christmas as they look upon a birthday occasion, as a convenient time to show their love for and generosity toward their children. To many husbands Christmas is a time to remember their wives with a gift as they do on wedding anniversaries, as an expression of their love and appreciation. Many Jews, who do not in any sense consider themselves Christians, find Christmas an occasion for expressing their generosity toward the public. That is to say, all such people are giving expression to a noble human quality, generosity, but their giving is in no way related to Christ.

"Likewise, much Christmas giving may be an expression of human gratitude. Gratitude is a noble trait. One fine way to express it is through giving. One may be grateful for his friends and relatives and as a result make them gifts. One may be grateful for his city and the opportunities it has afforded him, and express that gratitude in a large gift to some civic enterprise or institution. One may be grateful for his health and his prosperity and life and desire merely to give expression to his feeling in some appropriate way. He finds that appropriate way in giving at Christmastime when all the rest of the world is giving. But such giving may be in no way consciously related to Christ.

"Christmas giving ought to grow out of the Christian spirit. The Christian spirit is the result of one's appreciation of the significance of Christ for mankind. This is not to say that all human impulses are not in themselves divine, even Christ-like. It is only to say that if we are going to properly keep the "Christ Mass," our generosity ought to be consciously and vitally related to Christ Himself. The highest motive for giving, then, is not merely the joy it brings, not merely the noble impulse within which makes you feel generous toward humanity, but the feeling of the couple told about by Dr. Truett: 'In view of what Christ has done, what ought to be our feeling toward others?' Back of our Christmas giving ought to be the desire to incarnate in our lives, and express in all our deeds, the spirit of Christ, the Christ way of living, the Christ attitudes toward life and our fellows."

—Rev. Ilion T. Jones.

Dear December, white and hoary,
Half in sadness does he come,
For he tells us he will gather
All the old year's children home;
And he carries as he greets us,
Wreaths of holly—with a glow
That is red like winter firesides—
Twined with pearls of mistletoe;

'Cross the uplands, down the valleys
We can hear his gentle tread—
There is winter all around him
Over all the landscape spread;
Hark, he sings! "O earth awaken!
See the dawn of peace appear!
Lo, I bring the Saviour's Birthday—
'Tis the glory of the year!"

—Ida Scott Taylor.

WITH OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

MISS PRIM'S CHRISTMAS

By Reba Mahan Stevens

Miss Prim, you must know, was a doll —a very, very old-fashioned doll; and the Doll Shop of Mr. Tobias Hapgood was a very, very fashionable, up-to-date shop, indeed. Miss Prim had a body of plain, coarse muslin; her arms and legs were shapeless things with stubby, china hands and feet at the ends. Her head was of white china, like a cup or plate, with black hair painted on in the most precise waves. Her eyes were the bluest of blue, her mouth a tight little rosebud affair, her cheeks were like garden pinks, and over all spread the kindest, friendliest smile anyone could ever imagine. The smile, of course, was really Miss Prim.

Mr. Hapgood had been tremendously busy of late. "What a year for dolls!" he had said only a few days before. "Why, all the little girls in the world must be wanting dolls for Christmas!" And straightway he had sent off a rush order for another assortment.

"I wouldn't be caught without enough dolls," he said, beaming about over his shop.

The man at the factory wouldn't have him caught without enough dolls either, it seemed, for quick as quick had come back the big box, and without waiting for anyone to help him, Mr. Hapgood had slipped out of his stylish shop coat and into his frayed little back-room coat, and set about unpacking them.

"Well, well," he said to himself, "I'm glad they are here. Why, I wouldn't be caught without—" But suddenly remembering that he had made that exact remark before, he checked himself and dived into the box again.

"Upon my word!" he exclaimed, a bit crossly, as he brought out a discolored, shabby box. "Now have they made a mistake, after all!" When he had taken off the lid, he said, "Upon my word!" again slowly and emphatically. And after he had gazed a full minute at the doll he had uncovered, he said, "Upon my word!" again, this time in the tenderest way.

"How in the world did you ever get into that box?" he asked her. But he got no reply save the friendly smile. "Someone may be trying to play a joke on me, but they couldn't have pleased me better in a dozen years. You're a prim one, you are! Prim—that's a good name for you—Miss Prim! Well, well, well! Sit there on the shelf now while I get along with my work. You'll be a good influence in the shop, you will!"

Miss Prim was, indeed, a good influence in the shop—a better influence than Mr. Hapgood ever dreamed. For though he had kept his eye sharply on the business for years, yet he would have been greatly surprised to know of the doings that went on there after he tripped away home. Had he stepped through the door during the wee hours of the night, what a hubbub he would have found—everyone talking at once, even the older dolls who were supposed to know their book of manners backward and forward!

For a number of days Miss Prim was kept mostly in the back room, and it was from there that she overheard the grand French doll laughing about her to the others. "She's too funny for words!" said that stylish little lady.

But a cracked sort of voice piped up. "I don't think she is funny at all!" It was the jointed wooden clown, Miss Prim afterward discovered.

"Oh, but she is! She really is!" insisted Mademoiselle. "She hasn't a speck of style to her!"

"Well," the cracked voice replied, "she has a smile that's hard to beat, and I prefer a good smile to a fancy gown any day in the week, if you ask me!"

The very next evening Mr. Hapgood forgot to carry Miss Prim into the back room, and she spent her first night in the front shop.

"How do you do!" she said to all the dolls the minute the door was shut behind Mr. Hapgood. "I'm Miss Prim," she told them, with her friendliest friendly smile, and then each and every doll said "How do you do, Miss Prim!" just as

though they had not seen her a dozen times before.

Somehow, when Miss Prim turned her friendly smile on them they all smiled back in the same way. And, will you believe it?—before the night was half gone, everyone in the shop was entirely and completely in love with her! Then the trouble started. It began when the wooden clown wanted to sit on one side of Miss Prim and the French doll wanted to sit on the other side, and everyone else wanted to sit in these same places.

"I knew her first!" said the French doll.

"You made fun of her first, you mean!" snapped the clown. And so it went on until Miss Prim herself took a hand.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," she said, in her quiet, friendly way, "I'll sit in the middle and you can all sit in a circle around me." And that is what they did. "And I'll tell you a story!" And that is what she did.

Every night after that was just the same. Always some little squabbling about who should be nearest Miss Prim, and then, "I know what we can do—we will sit in a circle, and I'll tell you a story!"

Miss Prim was as full of stories as she was of sawdust—always a new one, always a good one.

Customers were coming thick and fast now and doll after doll was being carried happily away. The talk of the shop, each night, was of nothing but Christmas adventures.

"I feel sure the lady with the muff is going to buy me," boasted the schoolgirl doll one night.

"Not at all!" spoke up another. "She likes me much better on account of the buckles on my shoes!"

"Your buckles are loose and—"

"Oh," broke in Miss Prim quickly, "why not all sit in a circle while I tell you a story!"

All the dolls, big and little, long and short, told Miss Prim their dearest hopes and dreams. She was a good person to give secrets to, for she always kept them. And what was more, she got so interested in their plans that she entirely forgot to make any for herself.

Indeed, everything was in such a bustle of excitement, day after day, that Miss Prim was quite taken by surprise one evening when she looked around the shop and found how few of the dolls were still there to keep her company.

"Never in my life did I see so many people wanting dolls," said Mr. Tobias Hapgood for the hundredth time, as he surveyed the show window which was looking very bare. He caught up Miss Prim suddenly. "Look here, my lady," he laughed, "why can't you fill up a space?" And he thrust her in among the toys and left her there.

She sat there turning her friendliest smile on the joy that was going past the window—happy, laughing people with secrets, and bundles, and gay Christmas greetings. And street cars, and buses, and automobiles—oh, a thousand and one things that Miss Prim had never seen before. And the glittering signs that flashed off and on to her great amazement — that was what she was staring at when she first heard the little girl's voice outside.

"Oh, Mother, look! Look at the funny old doll!" The little girl was jumping up and down in her excitement, and Miss Prim was fascinated at the way her brown curls bobbed up and down, too. "Oh, Mother, she's just like the doll in Grandmother's attic. Can't I have her, Mother? Can't I, please?"

In they came through the shop door, and Miss Prim was taken from the shop window. If the little girl had not been just the sort of little girl she was, it is doubtful if Mr. Hapgood would have let Miss Prim go—but, in the end, he did.

"Only remember, my dear," he called after her, as she went out of the door, "if you ever grow tired of her, don't chuck her away in a box somewhere—bring her back to me!"

The very next day, so Miss Prim found, was Christmas, and a gay one it was for her, too. Although there were other dolls around the little girl's tree, Miss Prim was the one everybody wanted to hold,

and she had more attention than might have been good for her, had she been anyone else than just Miss Prim. It was a great day, indeed, and never once, from beginning to end, did the friendly smile leave Miss Prim's face.

When the night came down and everyone went away to bed, Miss Prim sat at the foot of the tree, gazing happily into the glowing fireplace. She watched the shadows that danced over the wall, and ceiling, and floor; and in her loving, friendly heart she fell to wondering about all the dolls from the shop. How she would have liked to say to them, "Let's all sit in a circle, and I'll tell you a story!"

By and by, she fell asleep, there under the tree, saying softly to herself, "I'm glad I'm here! I'm very, very glad I'm here! Still I shouldn't have minded a bit being left in the shop if Mr. Hapgood had wanted me to stay."

Now wasn't that just like Miss Prim?

—*Christian Science Monitor.*

TO THE CHILD JESUS

Dear Child Divine;
Sweet Brother mine,
Be with me today.

And when the light
Has changed to night
Be with me still, I pray.

Where'er I be,
Come Thou with me,
And never go away.
Amen.

THE CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE

MRS. HARRY A. STEVENS, *Chairman*, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.
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To help those who live far from schools, or who wish to continue their studies by means of correspondence with a teacher.

To establish Circulating Libraries in isolated communities, schools, and colleges in rural and mountain districts where public libraries and other educational privileges are not available.

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